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Re: HB 1196, Section 14

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to go on record opposing the proposed Connecticut River land swap, HB 1196, Section 14. Public lands are conserved for public enjoyment, not private gain. These lands do NOT serve as an emergency cash reserve for a strapped government. Rather, they are part of the permanent heritage we leave to our children, grandchildren, and the generations to follow. New York City faced a deficit crisis of monumental proportions in the late 1970's. The City could have sold Central Park to buy their way out, but they kept the public trust. The deficit passed, Central Park remains that city's crown jewel. Central Park is worth billions for development, which is precisely the reason it should remain in the public domain forever.

You should not endorse any land swap for public lands, regardless of how economically enticing the deal might be. If you set this precedent, you are putting all public lands up for sale and making them available to the very richest citizens for privatization as long as they can find something the government will take in trade. This cheats the public of the unique value of conserved real property and will inevitably result in the degradation of our public landholdings, as the very best pieces are privatized and land of lesser environmental value is substituted.

I encourage you in strongest possible terms to vote against this legislation.

Respectfully,

/s/

Jonathan Katz